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November 20, 2003

International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted changes to the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) in support of its mission to promote marine safety. SOLAS has recognized AIS as a primary means for ship collision avoidance, and has designated channels 87B and 88B as the international maritime AIS frequencies. The IMO has also established a timetable to phase-in AIS mandatory carriage. The implementation of AIS in the jurisdictional waters of the Seaway Corporations was performed in accordance with this designation. Such a designation, world-wide, is important from a pragmatic and commercial point of view. Should Maritel be successful in its petition, commercial vessels may be faced not only with additional costs in order to comply a derogation to the international standard, but the AIS seamless system as it is today may be rendered unusable in the international section of the St. Lawrence River.

For these reasons, it is important that the NTIA and FCC rule to ensure that channels 87B and 88B are secured for primary federal government use so that they are fully available for use by the SLSDC for its St. Lawrence Seaway Automatic Identification System.



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